

Floor Statement on S. 1132, the Law Enforcement Officers Safety Act Improvements Act of 2010

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September 29, 2010

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In 2004, the Congress approved the bipartisan Law Enforcement Officers Safety Act, which allows qualified retired and current law enforcement officers to carry a concealed firearm throughout the United States. The law requires retired officers to maintain appropriate firearms training.

Since enactment of the law, qualified retired officers have faced varying and inconsistent certification procedures from state to state, complicating their ability to be certified to carry a firearm.

The bill before the House was introduced in the Senate by Judiciary Committee Chairman Leahy and in the House by my Virginia colleague Mr. Forbes. It modernizes the existing law in these necessary respects:

- It will reduce from 15 to 10 the number of years a law enforcement officer must serve to be eligible to carry a firearm as a retiree. The 15-year requirement under current law inappropriately excludes many qualified retirees who go into law enforcement as a second career, often following military service.
- It will give retired officers more flexibility in obtaining certification to carry a firearm, while still maintaining rigorous standards for retirees who apply for this benefit. Our measure will clarify that a retiree can meet the qualification requirement using either the standards of the agency at which the retiree formerly served or those of the state in which the retiree currently resides.
- It will also allow a certified firearms instructor, qualified under state law, to conduct the firearms qualification test for retired law enforcement officers.
- It ensures that law enforcement officers of the Amtrak Police Department, the Federal Reserve, and the executive branch of the federal government are authorized to carry firearms under the law.
- Finally, it will eliminate the requirement that retirees have non-forfeitable retirement benefits to qualify, which unfairly excludes retirees from smaller law enforcement agencies which do not offer these retirement benefits.

Allowing trained active and retired law enforcement officers to carry firearms enhances public safety by ensuring that officers have the means to defend themselves and other innocent victims from acts of violence. It also appropriately honors the men and women who protect our neighborhoods and our communities.

The measure before us today was approved unanimously by the Senate in July. It is a common-sense, bipartisan measure which will ensure that retired law enforcement officers who have served honorably will be able to obtain the benefits of the 2004 law.

I urge approval of the measure.

